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Light makes right at the holiday table

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Thanksgiving is not a meal where wine is expected to play a starring role. Instead, wine on Thanksgiving has to be like the quiet guy in Penn & Teller — suavely supportive, while the turkey, stuffing and fixing's get the applause. At the end of the meal, you want the hosts to say, "That wine you brought went really with everything."

Bargain Wines

This is not the dinner to open a big-bodied, heavily tannic wine, such as a Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot or Shiraz. They will overpower the food, rather than complement it. Keep in mind that you're not just bringing a wine to go with turkey. The same plate might also hold potatoes, cranberry sauce, autumn vegetables like Brussels sprouts and the ever-popular, but extremely wine-unfriendly, sweet potatoes with marshmallow topping.

That's why I look for lighter-bodied Pinot Noirs. Finding a good Pinot for \$10 is always a challenge, but the following three are quite decent.



Chronicle / Eric Luse

2004 Angeline Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir: Great mate for the Thanksgiving meal.

My favorite of this week's Pinot trio is the 2004 Martin Ray Angeline Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, which has a complex aroma of cherry, tree bark, earth and fresh herbs. On the palate, it's mostly cherry fruit with notes of earth and herbs. In this price range, it's hard to beat.

Shopping List

RED WINES

2004 Angeline Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

2004 Castle Rock Carneros Pinot Noir

2004 Castle Rock Monterey County Pinot Noir

2003 Montevina Amador County Barbera

2002 Parducci California Petite Sirah